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SUBJECT: GREK POLICE OPERATION "NEW LIFE" NETS MAJOR EURO
TRAFFICKING RING

¶1. In another success story for Greek anti-trafficking efforts, Greek Police on November 28 arrested members of a major European trafficking network in an operation code-named "New Life." Police Major George Vanikiotis, Head of the Athens Anti-Trafficking Unit, told Embassy that his unit moved against the ring in Athens and Thessaloniki after tracking its activities for over a year with the help of Europol and Interpol. They arrested nine suspected traffickers (seven men and two women) and freed a Romanian and two Russian female trafficking victims. The three women were acknowledged as trafficking victims by the Prosecutor, were cooperating with the authorities, and had denounced the activities of the network.

¶2. Police also arrested 21 people, mainly women, during raids on strip clubs, bars, and brothels for violations of prostitution laws. They were still seeking 23 other suspects (15 Greeks, four Russians, three Germans, and a Turk) believed to be members of the European-wide trafficking ring. The network allegedly was luring women into prostitution through job agencies in Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Romania, and Moldova. The recruited women were allegedly taken to Moscow where they were provided with false documents then sent to different European countries, including Greece. The traffickers allegedly held the women captive in apartments in Athens and Thessaloniki under threats against themselves and their families. The women were forced to perform numerous sex acts per day, and the ring was daily making 2,000 euro from each brothel.

¶3. The ring had been in operation for at least two years and laundered its proceeds by acquiring and operating coffee shops, night clubs, and strip shows in Athens and Thessaloniki. Vanikiotis said the authorities would continue the hunt for other network members in Greece and other European countries.
COUNTRYMAN